

Dear Members: Welcome to our second program of the season. Linda Briggs, President, welcomed members and non-members alike. We were very glad to see such a great turnout — **61 attendees!**

VRCC is a tech club at heart, offering programming centered around technology. Our Thursday programs are always interesting, and you can count on learning something every time you attend.

The Club also offers programming outside of tech. Coming up soon, for example, we'll have guest speakers from the **Museum of Art** and **Brackett Library**.

Want to get your friends to join our club? **BOGO Membership — \$20 for two people**. Come to the lab in PACH with your friend/spouse/neighbor, \$20 in cash, and your Vista IDs.

Program Speaker: Vicky Getz, Blue Stream & DirecTV Stream

Vicky prepared two excellent handouts for attendees:

- A detailed booklet guide
- An alphabetical listing of all DirecTV Stream channels

Thank you, Vicky!

U-verse Shutdown & AT&T Accounts

U-verse is ending by the **end of January**. Anyone who still has an AT&T account must **call and close it**; returning equipment alone does *not* close the account.

Within 24 hours of closing the account, AT&T sends an email listing the serial numbers of the equipment they want returned. Bring those items to a **UPS Store** along with your AT&T account number and keep the receipt.

If your equipment is old enough to be considered obsolete, the email will say so and instruct you to dispose of it yourself.

Closest UPS location: **6th Avenue & 21st Street**.

Other UPS stores: near **Target** and near **58th Street** (beyond the hospital).

Retain your receipt!

If your AT&T account is not in good standing, they may restrict access to your AT&T email. Experts recommend avoiding ISP-provided email entirely. Better options: **Gmail, Outlook, iCloud**. AT&T email has poor spam filtering.

Blue Stream vs. DirecTV

- **Blue Stream** provides the internet.
- **DirecTV Stream Choice** provides the TV service.
They are separate.

Some residents are paying extra to keep DirecTV through AT&T, but the community's DirecTV streaming package works on many devices and is generally easier to manage.

Devices & Compatibility

DirecTV's streaming device is the **Gemini box** (an Android TV box). It works best with Chrome and the Google ecosystem.

DirecTV Stream also works on:

- Apple TV
- Roku
- Chromecast
- Newer smart TVs

Older smart TVs ($\approx 6+$ years) may not support the DirecTV app. When a TV becomes too old to run apps, a Roku stick or similar device is the workaround.

Six years is Vicky's rule of thumb for updating technology.

Streaming Limits

At home (your Vista "unit"):

- Up to **20 simultaneous streams**

Away from home:

- Up to **2 TV-connected devices**
- Additional mobile devices allowed

Network-specific limits (max 3 streams total):

- Fox networks
- Big Ten
- STARZ
- NHL Network

Home Location

DirecTV considers your **unit** your "home location."

You may change your home location **up to 4 times per year**.

Even without changing it, you can use **two boxes away from home**.

Gemini Box vs. DirecTV App

Gemini box features:

- Direct channel entry
- Page up/down

- Alphabetical channel navigation
- Renting/purchasing movies
- Full guide features

App limitations (Roku, smart TVs):

- Fewer navigation buttons
- No direct channel numbers
- Slower guide navigation

Remote Control

The Gemini remote is Bluetooth with infrared for TV control.

- **Back** steps out of menus
- **Exit** jumps all the way out
- Voice commands require tapping the microphone button, then releasing it before speaking
- Many users mistakenly hold the button down, preventing it from listening

Pairing the Remote

If the remote becomes unpaired:

- Press **Fast Forward + Rewind** to re-pair

The remote must also be paired with the TV for:

- Power
- Volume
- Input

Using a Phone as a Remote

DirecTV offers a phone app that can control the box (except volume). Useful if someone falls asleep holding the remote.

HDMI-CEC

Many TVs can control the Gemini box through **HDMI-CEC**, enabling:

- Channel changes
- Playback controls
- Input switching

CEC must be enabled in the TV's settings.

DVR & Recordings

- Each profile gets **20 hours** of DVR storage

- Limit of **10 episodes per series**
- Unlimited DVR is available for **\$10.99/month**
- The 10-episode limit still applies
- “New episodes only” does not always work correctly on 24/7 channels
- Recordings are shared across devices but tied to the profile that scheduled them

UPDATE from Vicky:

When you add unlimited DVR storage, the storage used/remaining indicator disappears from all profiles.

Profiles

Up to **five profiles** per account. Each profile has its own:

- Favorites
- Recommendations
- DVR hours
- Recent channels

You must be in the correct profile before scheduling recordings.

Favorites & Navigation

- Press and hold **OK** to add/remove favorites
- Alphabetical channel sorting improves navigation
- Press **Up** while watching TV to access recent channels and recommendations

Closed Captions

Roku:

- More flexible caption settings (size, transparency)

Gemini box:

- Standard (large) or small (too small)
- Voice commands can toggle captions

Multi View – Mixed Channels

Watch **four channels** at once:

- Sports Mix
- News Mix
- Kids Mix

Traveling With the Gemini Box

Not recommended.

If lost, it cannot be deauthorized from your account.

Roku is safer for travel because you can sign out remotely.

Using DirecTV Away From Home

You can use the DirecTV app on Roku or smart TVs by signing in with your username and password.

You do **not** need to change your home network to watch away from home.

Sports Central

Sports Central shows:

- Where games are airing (Peacock, ESPN, ESPN+, etc.)
- Blackout restrictions
- Your favorite teams' schedules

Blue Stream Internet

The network is password-protected and does not use insecure WPS pairing.

Speeds vary depending on:

- 2.4 GHz vs. 5 GHz
- Number of active devices
- Age of your device's Wi-Fi card

5 GHz provides much faster speeds.

Rumors about buildings being limited to 300 Mbps are false.

UPDATE from Vicky — Security Warning:

When changing ISPs but keeping the same network name, you may see an "Insecure Connection" warning due to DNS conflicts.

This is a protective measure against "Evil Twin" networks.

To fix it: **Forget the network and rejoin.**

Residents Without Email or Smartphones

Some residents cannot receive verification codes because they have no email or smartphone.

This makes DirecTV setup difficult.

The Plume Wi-Fi system also requires a smartphone.

Smart TV Privacy Settings

Smart TVs may include:

- **ACR (Automatic Content Recognition)**
- **Always-listening microphones**

These can send screenshots or audio triggers to manufacturers.

ACR should be turned off when possible, especially if using the TV as a computer monitor. Some TVs make this difficult or impossible.

Next Program:

Presentation: ACT on Artificial Intelligence (AI)

January 22nd — PACH — 9:30 a.m. sharp!

Bring a friend or neighbor. Spread the word.

Thank you!

Nancy Dalley, VRCC Secretary